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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this report is to present information about the organization of middle schools in the school district of Philadelphia. The report includes: (1) summary information on rostering/scheduling practices; and (2) comparisons of promotion/retention rates, average daily attendance, and suspension rates in middle schools with different types of internal organizations. (JAM)

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MIDDLE SCHOOL
ORGANIZATION AND SCHEDULING

MAY 1988

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OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
PRIORITY OPERATIONS EVALUATION SERVICES
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MIDDLE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION SUMMARY

This survey found a wide spectrum of organizational patterns in middle schools in the School District. Even within the same sub-district, practices appear to vary greatly from school to school.

General Findings

- * Roughly half (7 out of 15) of the middle schools currently organize for instruction by using a House Plan.
- * Five middle schools use modular scheduling in planning their roster.
- * Middle schools that do not have a House Plan, sometimes have "grade teams" in 5th and/or 6th grades and use standard, block rostering in 7th and 8th grades.

Remediation/ Chapter 1 Services

- * The organization of the school does not appear to determine how Chapter 1 services are delivered to eligible students. Middle schools with, and without, house plans typically use Option IV to deliver remedial services in mathematics. In most schools, all students are rostered for a Reading class which is separate from, and in addition to English/ Language Arts. Chapter 1 eligible students attend smaller classes which are taught by Chapter 1 reading specialist teachers.
- * In at least two middle schools the Chapter 1 program is a "pull-out" program for students in grades 5 and 6.

Promotion Rate in Chapter 1 Middle Schools

- * The percentage of students promoted in Chapter 1 eligible Middle Schools with House Plans was well above the promotion rate in middle schools without House Plans.

Two Junior High Schools Which Were Converted to Middle Schools

- * In both of the former junior high schools which were converted to middle schools (beginning in the 1986-87 school year), the average daily attendance (ADA) went up and the suspension rate went down after the conversion.

Short Lunch Period

- * In most middle schools, the student lunch period is between 22 and 30 minutes in length. Only 4 out of the 15 schools surveyed had lunch periods lasting 40 or 45 minutes. Principals report that discipline problems are greatly reduced when the lunch period is shortened.

Physical Plant Issues

- * Many principals stated that the physical layout of the building prevented them from implementing a House Plan. However, 2 middle schools with House Plans, are located in buildings which were not built in a House Design.
- * Two middle schools which were built in a House Design no longer have a House Plan.

Vertical House Plans

- * Only 3 of the 15 middle schools surveyed use a Vertical House Model (which includes all grades in each House). All of the schools using this type of plan are located in buildings which were constructed in a House Design. Two of these schools (Baldi & Lewis) also use modular scheduling. Both of these schools have an average daily attendance rate which is over 90%.

Perceived Advantages of a House Plan

- * Many principals stated that having a House Plan:
 - improves school climate;
 - allows teachers to gain a more intense knowledge of students; and,
 - provides alternatives, within the school, for students who are not succeeding behaviorally or academically.

Impressions

Principals of schools with House Plans were eager to articulate why they believe this approach is advantageous at the Middle School level. In most cases these principals indicated that they take a "hands on" approach to rostering because they believe the organization of the school directly effects the success of the instructional program.

Although there is no single best way to organize a middle school it appears that the House and/or Team approach may have advantages for middle school students (ages 10 to 14). During this period, students are undergoing physical, psychological and intellectual changes. Although they are reaching the stage academically where they may benefit from instruction by subject-matter specialists they also still require close supervision by adults. A good middle school balances the two goals of high academic achievement / quality instruction and positive teacher-student relations. (McPartland, 1988)

The House and/or Team approach is one way for schools to address these two goals. Two of the principals who were among the strongest advocates of a House Plan for middle schools served for years as junior high school Roster Chairpersons while they were teachers. Both of these individuals stressed the importance of approaching Middle School rostering and scheduling differently from the way it is typically approached in junior high schools.

Many of the principals who were interviewed for this study were extremely knowledgeable about the organization of Middle Schools. Clearly, their expertise should be considered the best source of first hand information on planning for instruction at this level.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND SCHEDULING

Overview

The major purpose of this report is to present information about the organization of middle schools in the School District of Philadelphia.

This report includes:

- * summary information on rostering/scheduling practices in middle schools
 - * comparisons of promotion/retention rates, average daily attendance, and suspension rates in middle schools with different types of internal organizations
-

The information presented in this report was gathered by the School Organization Unit of the Office of Research and Evaluation (O.R.E.). Telephone interviews with middle school principals (or their designees) were conducted during January and February, 1988. Additional descriptive information on each school was obtained from the 1986-87 and 1987-88 Superintendent's Management Information Center (MIC). Promotion/retention information was provided by the Office of Systemwide Student Promotion Programs.

The following Special Admission Middle Schools were excluded from this survey:

School	Code	Enrollment
Middle Years Alternative	158	164
AMY - 2	543	241
AMY - 6	568	287

Definition of Terms

Organizational Models

1. House Plan - A House is a sub-unit within the school. Houses enable students to identify with a smaller unit. By working exclusively with only a portion of the school's student body, teachers can gain a more intense knowledge of the students. Listed below are the two types of House organizations.

Horizontal House Plan - each House represents a specific grade or subject

Vertical House Plan - provides for each grade complement and discipline (subject) within each House

2. Standard, Block Rostering (Schools without House Plans) - Classes move together as a unit throughout the school. This approach to rostering is very similar to the traditional junior high school approach.

Scheduling

Modular scheduling is an approach which can increase the amount of flexibility in a roster. "Mods" are blocks of time which usually are 18 to 25 minutes in length. They replace the traditional 45 minute period in the organization of the school day. The number of mods allotted to a given subject varies, depending on the nature of the subject or the amount of time students need to spend on various activities. Special subjects, such as Art, Physical Education, or Science Labs, for example, may be scheduled for 3 or 4 mods at a time.

Organizational Approach

District	School	Organizational Approach
1	* Tilden	Horizontal House & Departmental
1	Pepper	Horizontal House
1	* Turner	Standard Blk/Grade teams
2	* Vare	Standard Block
2	Thomas	Standard Blk/Grade teams
4	* Rhodes	Horizontal House
5	Conwell	Standard Blk/Grade teams
6	Leeds	Standard Block
6	* Pickett	Standard Block
6	Lewis	Vertical House
7	* Clemente	Horizontal House
8	Meehan	Vertical House
8	Rush	Standard Block
8	Baldi	Vertical House
8	Labrum	Standard Block

* E.C.I.A. Chapter 1 eligible middle schools.

Middle Schools Using Modular Scheduling

School Name

Duration of Mods

Turner.....20 min.

Conwell.....25 min.

Lewis.....20 min.

Baldi.....23 min.

Meehan.....24 min.

Middle Schools Built In A House Design

Pepper

Turner*

Rhodes

Lewis

Pickett*

Baldi

Meehan

* These schools do not currently have a House Plan.

Promotion Rate in Middle Schools

	Percentage of Students Promoted By Policy and Exception	
	June 1986	June 1987
All Middle Schools	78.3 %	76.2%
Middle Schools with a House Plan	79.8%	78.0%
Middle Schools without a House Plan	72.5%	72.3%

* Excludes Full & Part-time Special Education

This information was obtained from the
Office of Systemwide Student Promotion Programs.

Proportion of Middle School Students
Failing to Meet Promotional Standards

	Percentage of Students *	
	June 1986	June 1987
All Middle Schools	21.7 %	23.8%
Middle Schools with a House Plan	20.2%	22.0%
Middle Schools without a House Plan	27.5%	27.7%

* Excludes Full & Part-time Special Education

Failing to Meet Promotional Standards = Students Retained by Policy; Students Retained by Exception; and, Students who did not meet the criteria for promotion but who could not be retained because they were already repeating the grade.

This information was obtained from the
Office of Systemwide Student Promotion Programs.

Promotion Rate in Chapter 1 and Non-Chapter 1
Middle Schools

	Percentage of Students Promoted By Policy and Exception *	
	June 1986	June 1987

All Chapter 1 Middle Schools	78.1%	74.3%
Schools with House Plan	89.9%	76.6%
Schools without House Plan	70.9%	67.9%

All Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools	78.6%	77.7%
Schools with House Plan	79.7%	79.2%
Schools without House Plan	74.3%	75.0%

* Full & Part-time Special Education Students were excluded
from enrollment figures.

This information was obtained from the
Office of Systemwide Student Promotion Programs.

Proportion of Middle School Students
Failing to Meet Promotional Standards
in
Chapter 1 and Non-Chapter 1 Schools

----- Percentage of Students *		
	June 1986	June 1987
All Chapter 1 Middle Schools	21.9%	25.6%
Chapter 1 Middle Schools with a House Plan	20.1%	23.3%
Chapter 1 Middle Schools without a House Plan	29.1%	32.0%
All Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools	21.4%	22.2%
Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools with a house Plan	20.3%	20.8%
Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools without a House Plan	25.7%	24.9%

* Full & Part-time Special Education Students were excluded from enrollment figures.

Organization Type
and
Average Daily Attendance

Organizational Type	Average Daily Attendance	
	1985-86	1986-87
Middle Schools with House Plans	88%	85.3%
Middle Schools without House Plans	84%	85.7%

* Average Daily Attendance Rates were obtained from the
1986-87 and 1987-88 Superintendent's MIC.

Organization Type
and
Average Daily Attendance

Chapter 1 and Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools

Organizational Type	Average Daily Attendance	
	1985-86	1986-87
All Chapter 1 Middle Schools	84.0%	82.5%
Chapter 1 Middle Schools with a House Plan	84.8%	82.2%
Chapter 1 Middle Schools without a House Plan	82.0%	83.1%
All Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools	88.2%	87.5%
Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools with a House Plan	89.6%	87.7%
Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools without a House Plan	85.7%	87.1%

Organization Type
and
Suspension Rate

Organizational Type	Suspension Rate *	
	1985-86	1986-87
Middle Schools with House Plans	26.3%	24.0%
Middle Schools without House Plans	27.0%	25.2%

* A Suspension Rate of 24% may also be read as 24 suspensions for every 100 students enrolled in the schools.

Organization Type
and
Suspension Rate

Chapter 1 and Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools

Organizational Type	Suspension Rate *	
	1985-86	1986-87
All Chapter 1 Middle Schools	26.4%	25%
Chapter 1 Middle Schools with a House Plan	29.9%	27%
Chapter 1 Middle Schools without a House Plan	21.7%	13%
All Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools	26.6%	22.9%
Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools with a House Plan	23.1%	21.6%
Non-Chapter 1 Middle Schools without a House Plan	33.5%	33.1%

* A Suspension Rate of 24% may also be read as 24 suspensions for every 100 students enrolled in the schools.